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BEHEMOTH

- Lago Orta, Italy: "Orta is Italy's Loch Ness, steeped in legends about serpents and werewolves. When Giulio, dragon-buster extraordinaire, came to purge the [lake's] island in 390, the fishermen were too scared to carry him across, so he used his cloak as a sail, cutting quite a dash as the world's first original windsurfer. He slayed the dragon and you'd better believe it: a single vertebra with the diameter of a life buoy is on display in the island's basilica" - David Wickers: Shores of Myth and Serenity (The Sunday Times, 22.4., p. G9). The dragon of Lago Orta is also mentioned in Umberto Cordier's compendium of Italian monsters, Guida ai draghi e mostri in Italia (SugarCo Edizioni: Milan 1986: 83 - 85).

- Lago de Cote, Costa Rica: I have pointed out more than once that the powerful UFO myth slowly replaced many motifs of monster tradition - the many sightings of "Russian submarines" off Sweden are only one obvious example. Here, now, is a typical many-humped lake monster, told with UFO terminology, in Jacques Vallee's new book (Confrontations. New York: Ballantine Books, 1990, p. 60). Two witnesses observed an unusual object in Lago de Cote on October 25, 1986, at 9 a.m.: "First they saw, about 1,800 feet away, a row of three or four postlike cylinders reaching about three feet above the surface of the lake, which was quiet and flat as a mirror. Then they saw a series of objects sticking out about three feet above the water and three feet apart. They could clearly observe the cylinders, which were of a dark hue, either gray or coffee-coloured. After 5 or 10 minutes the objects disappeared. (...) as if they were attached to a single structure, the whole thing disappeared with much turmoil and waves." Sounds familiar? Dark objects 3 ft high and 3 ft apart on a lake calm as a millpond, causing much turmoil ... I wrote a second part for my article on "The Evolution of Lake Monsters" for the INFO Journal which gives more examples for this process - by some strange coincidence, the postscript to this reports was printed in INFO Journal 59 as a postscript to my report on falls and rains in Central Europe

- Loch Ness: A London bookmaker has put a prize on Nessie! According to the Neue Zürcher Zeitung of May 20 (p. 9c, Reuters news report, which was also published in the Mannheimer Morgen and mentioned in German TV news of about that date), the bookmaker offered a reward of 600,000 Swiss francs for a proof for the reality of the monster. The paper also mentions a three-day hunt for the monster organized by the local tourist board in Oktober - a press gimmick, I assume. Reuters says that the monster has been seen 800 times in the past 60 years - this is the figure I worked out during my research and published in Henry Bauers book. It is nice to see some correct facts in the papers. The Rheinpfalz (May 29) had an AP report on an article in the previous day's London Times (p. 2). It says the monster was spotted in May by a Glasgow visitor. According to Mackay Consultants, the monster earns Scotland a good 25 million Pounds a year. About 500,000 tourists visit Inverness each year in the hope of seeing the creature. The Inverness Consultants maintain that the monster industry provides 2,500 jobs. Tony Mackay, head of Mackay Consultants, said: "People have not so far appreciated the importance of Nessie as a magnet for tourists. We were amazed by the results of our research, which certainly puts the monster forward as one of the main tourist attractions of Scotland... Her timing is impeccable. If we had a year with no reported sightings, the number of visitors would fall." This prompts AP to imply that this is what lies behind the Nessie legend: it was invented by the local tourist board. These over-simplifications are of no use in serious sociological study.

● Yanzhou, China: China im Bild (4/1990,p.20) had a picture of a 7.5m, 1,500 kg sword excavated in Yanzhou, Shandong Province - the largest in the world. It was cast in the reign of Qing emperor Kangxi (1662 - 1723) as a ritual instrument to control an evil dragon and buried under the Sihe bridge. This dragon, once again, was not an unidentified animal, but a symbol of earth energies.

● Bibliography: Sightings of monsters in Lake Utopia, Canada, in 1982 and 1987 - Pursuit 21: 4, 1988, p.184.

ISIS

● Another attack on the Little Mermaid statue in Copenhagen (Rheinpfalz, Rhein-Zeitung, 8. May). ● A short note on initial bipedalism, from 1940, without mention of aquatic apes, but strong Nazi overtones, reprinted in Spektrum der Wissenschaft, June 1990, p.135.

LEVIATHAN

● Hog Island, Florida: In 1983, R Dash and B Hendrickson saw a sea serpent with "a series of humps...It had a silvery bottom and grayish top. We watched for 10 minutes...It looked like it was just feeding leisurely...I estimated it to be 40 to 45 feet." - INFO Journal 59, p.28.

● Suva, Fiji: An Arab News AP report (May 29, p.16) says a group of divers has discovered "the remains of four prehistoric creatures in a underwater cave in the north of Fiji". Kevin Deacon, a professional diver from Matagi Island (135 miles northeast of Suva) said the remains had been discovered by the Douglas family, he then had taken pictures of them: "We have found what appears to be two adults, one adolescent and a juvenile. They bear no resemblance to any marine creature I know." The adult skulls were about one metre long with a total body length of 8 to 10 m. They looked like land animals or some amphibious species. The report is not very clear on the term "prehistoric", probably it implies fossils, not fresh remains.

● Bibliography: Michael Frizzel on Chessie: INFO 59, p.21. / Fortean Times will publish Doc Shiels book on his monster hunts "Monstrum" in July / The International Herald Tribune (May 7,p.1) says molecular biologists have discovered that the world's 11 species of crocodiles are so closely related that they must have evolved from a single location as recently as 12 million years ago. This means "that they must have swum across the oceans to reach their current habitats". Does this explain some sea monster sightings? Do these marine missing links still exist?

KRAKEN

● Octopus attack in the Phillipines, on Dec 12, 1989: INFO 59, p.30.

USO

● Pacific Ocean: A ship from Tokyo University's Ocean Research Institute located a large object travelling over 4 times the speed of sound, with a diameter of 400 m, over the Pacific (no date). They think it was a plasma phenomenon, related to the ones that create the circles in English fields. (Observer, May 20, p.69)

● Irish Sea: Newsweek (May 28, pp.18/19) had a longer report on vanishing ships in the Irish Sea, mainly trawlers which unfortunately catch mysterious subs in their nets. I have covered this topic repeatedly in Bilk. In contrast to the Swedish subs, these USOs are real, mainly British and US-craft, and the occasional Soviet one, playing war. There have been more than 40 incidents since 1980. Bernard Moffat, assistant secretary of the Celtic League: "When a boat sinks in good conditions it's either snagged or a sea monster, and I don't believe in sea monsters".

● Lady of the Lake USO - see INFO 59 (March 1990), p.23.

WHALES

● 26.2. - 7 Risso's dolphins stranded near Cape Town (Arab News,1.3.,16) // 2.3. - 22m blue whale dead off Alexandria, Egypt (Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung,3.3.,7a; Saudi Gazette,3.3.,2;Neue Zürcher Zeitung,6.3.,5b) // mass death of porpoises through pollution, Gulf of Mexico (NZZ, 13.3.,5d) // 2.4. - sperm whale stranded at Terschelling, Netherlands (Utrechts Nieuwsblad, 3.4.,credit: G. van Leusden) // 2.4. - 2 sperm whales stranded at Fanö, Denmark, 15m (Süddeutsche Zeitung, 3.4.,52e)